



[4337-15]

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Bureau of Indian Affairs

[167A2100DD / AAKC001030 / AOA501010.999900]

Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Aiya Solar Project, Clark County, Nevada

AGENCY: Bureau of Indian Affairs, Interior.

ACTION: Notice of availability.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), as the lead Federal agency, with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Moapa Band of Paiute Indians (Tribe) as Cooperating Agencies, has prepared a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the proposed Aiya Solar Project on the Moapa River Indian Reservation in Clark County, Nevada. This notice announces that the FEIS is now available for public review.

DATES: The Record of Decision on the proposed action will be issued no sooner than 30 days after EPA publishes a Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register*.

ADDRESSES: You may request a compact disk copy of the FEIS by providing your name and address in writing or by voicemail to Mr. Chip Lewis, Acting Regional Environmental Protection Officer, BIA Western Regional Office, Branch of Environmental Quality Services, 2600 North Central Avenue, 4th Floor Mail Room, Phoenix, Arizona 85004-3008; fax (602) 379-3833; email: chip.lewis@bia.gov. The FEIS will be available for review at: BIA Western Regional Office, 2600 North Central

Avenue, 12th Floor, Suite 210, Phoenix, Arizona; BIA Southern Paiute Agency, 180 North 200 East, Suite 111, St. George, Utah; and the BLM Southern Nevada District Office, 4701 N. Torrey Pines Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada. The FEIS is also available on line at: www.AiyaSolarProjectEIS.com. Individual paper copies of the FEIS will be provided only upon request.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Chip Lewis, BIA Western Regional Office, Branch of Environmental Quality Services, 2600 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85004–3008, telephone (602) 379–6782; or Mr. Garry Cantley at (602) 379-6750.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed Federal action, taken under 25 U.S.C. 415, is BIA’s approval of a solar energy ground lease and associated agreements entered into by the Tribe with Aiya Solar Project, LLC (Aiya Solar or Applicant), a wholly owned subsidiary of First Solar, Inc. (First Solar), to provide for construction and operation of an up-to 100 megawatt (MW) alternating current solar photovoltaic (PV) electricity generation facility located entirely on the Moapa River Indian Reservation and specifically on lands held in trust by the United States for the Tribe. The proposed 230 kilovolt (kV) generation-tie transmission line required for interconnection would be located on Tribal lands, private lands and Federal lands administered and managed by BLM. The Applicant has accordingly requested that the BIA and BLM additionally approve rights-of-way (ROWs) authorizing the construction and operation of the transmission line. Together, the proposed solar energy facility, transmission line, and other associated facilities make up the proposed Aiya Solar Project (Project).

The Project would be located in Township 14 South, Range 66 East, Sections 29, 30, 31, and 32 Mount Diablo Meridian, Nevada. The generation facility would generate electricity using PV panels. Also included would be inverters, a collection system, an on-site substation to step-up the voltage to transmission level voltage at 230 kV, an operations and maintenance building, and other related facilities. An overhead 230 kV generation-tie transmission line, approximately 2.7 miles long, would connect the solar project to NV Energy's Reid-Gardner 230kV substation.

Construction of the Project is expected to take approximately 12 to 15 months. The Applicant is expected to operate the energy facility for 30 years, with two options to renew the lease for an additional 10 years, if mutually acceptable to the Tribe and Applicant. During construction, the PV panels will be placed on top of fixed-tilt and/or single-axis tracking mounting systems that are set on steel posts embedded in the ground. Other foundation design techniques may be used depending on the site topography and conditions. No water will be used to generate electricity during operations. Water will be needed during construction for dust control and a minimal amount will be needed during operations for landscape irrigation and administrative and sanitary water use on site. The water supply required for construction of the Project would be leased from the Moapa Band and would be provided via a new temporary intake installed in the Muddy River and a new temporary above-ground pipeline approximately two miles in length. Operational water would be provided through a tap into an existing water pipeline that crosses the solar site. Access to the Project will be provided via State Highway 168.

The purposes of the Project are to: (1) provide a long-term, diverse, and viable economic revenue base and job opportunities for the Tribe; (2) help Nevada and

neighboring states to meet their state renewable energy needs; and (3) allow the Tribe, in partnership with the Applicant, to optimize the use of the lease site while maximizing the potential economic benefit to the Tribe.

The BIA and BLM will use the EIS to make decisions on the land lease and ROW applications under their respective jurisdiction; EPA may use the document to make decisions under its authorities; the Tribe may use the EIS to make decisions under its Tribal Environmental Policy Ordinance; and the USFWS may use the EIS to support its decision under the Endangered Species Act.

Authority: This notice is published in accordance with section 1503.1 of the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1500 et seq.) and the Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR part 46) implementing the procedural requirements of NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), and in accordance with the exercise of authority delegated to the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs by part 209 of the Department Manual.

Dated: March 1, 2016

Lawrence S. Roberts,

Acting Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs.

[FR Doc. 2016-05458 Filed: 3/9/2016 8:45 am; Publication Date: 3/10/2016]